

A STUDY OF THE WRITINGS  
OF THE LATE PHILLIPS BROOKS  
ON JESUS CHRIST

BY

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## PREFACE

When the distinguished Scotch theologian Principal John Tullock of St. Marys College, Aberdeen was visiting Boston, Massachusetts in the spring of 1874, he attended the service of worship of Trinity Episcopal Church on Sunday, April 26. Following is a part of his letter to his wife describing his impression:

I have just heard the most remarkable sermon I have ever heard in my life (I use the word in no American sense) from Mr. Phillips Brooks, an Episcopal clergyman here; equal to the best of Frederick Robertson's sermons, with a vigor and force of thought which he has not always. I never heard preaching like it, and you know how slow I am to praise preachers. So much thought and so much life combined; such a reach of mind, and such a depth and insight of soul. I was electrified. I could have got up and shouted.<sup>1</sup>

This is the kind of praise one finds so frequently when reading about the late Phillips Brooks, Rector of Trinity Church, Boston, and later Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts, that the question comes to one's mind, "What was his secret?" What was the power of this man, whom so many called the greatest of the preachers in the century of pulpit giants?

An answer comes to us from the Reverend Charles Edward Jefferson, the past Honorary Minister of Broadway Tabernacle, New York City, upon the occasion of his preaching at Trinity Church, Boston, on Sunday, December 13, 1931, when he said:

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<sup>1</sup>Francis G. Ensley, "Phillips Brooks and the Incarnation," Religion in Life, XX (Summer, 1951), 350.

For he never allowed us to lose sight of Christ. Every sermon was baptized into the Spirit of Christ. No matter what his text, one could always feel certain that before he got done with us we should all be standing before the judgment seat of Christ. He was sure that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Like Paul, he was always saying, "I beseech you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." "Come to Jesus" was one of his favorite exhortations. We expect that appeal in a camp meeting or in an evangelistic campaign or in a Salvation Army meeting, but I did not expect to hear it at the center of Boston culture. I never dreamed of hearing it from the passionate lips of America's greatest preacher. It was fitting that at his funeral we should sing, "Jesus Lover of my soul/Let me to Thy bosom fly." I ranked Brooks above all the other Boston preachers of my day because he above all others exalted the revelation of God's heart in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

That Jesus Christ was the Divine Revealer of God the Father was at the heart of the preaching of Phillips Brooks is apparent to those who have read even a part of his works. Phillips Brooks preached the eternal Fatherhood of God, the sonship of all men, and Jesus Christ as the Saviour of man. His power was the Spirit of Jesus Christ which dwelt within him. His central interest and motive was Jesus Christ. It is the purpose of this paper to state what Phillips Brooks thought about Jesus Christ, although it is not to be taken as a complete work on this vast subject.

The first chapter of this paper is an introduction to Phillips Brooks, telling of his background and the events of his life. The second chapter consists of parts of his works, his addresses, lectures,

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<sup>1</sup>Charles E. Jefferson, I Remember the Days of Old. A sermon preached in Trinity Church, Boston, Sunday, December 13, 1931. Privately printed, a copy to be found in the Library of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, Washington, D. C.

and sermons, in which he specifically mentions Jesus Christ. Although they are not mutually exclusive, the four parts of this chapter cover what Phillips Brooks thought of Jesus as a man, as the Son of God, as the Proclaimer of truth, and as the Worker. The writer's comments make up the third chapter.

## CHAPTER I

### THE MAN, PHILLIPS BROOKS

Phillips Brooks was born at the house No. 56 High Street in Boston, Massachusetts on December 13, 1835. He was the second of six sons. His mother's name had been Phillips. His ancestors on both sides of his family arrived in the Colonies around 1630. Each family was wealthy in this world's goods. There were many ministers in each family. There was a governor of Massachusetts in the family, and one of Phillips' relatives, Peter Chardon Brooks, was reputed to be the wealthiest man in Boston at the time of Phillips' birth.

One of the greatest influences in Phillips' life was his mother. She was a very good woman, faithful to her Church, and she had both the love of God and of her fellowman in her heart. Phillips caught the Spirit of Jesus from her. Her letters to him reveal her love for him and her feelings about her Lord. A letter of October 20, 1857 to Phillips at the beginning of his second year at the Theological Seminary at Alexandria, Virginia indicates this.

My dear Philly — I am thinking of you continually and we cannot be done missing you, and it is so cheering to get news of you. I wish I could look into your room and see if you look comfortable, and how you have arranged your clothes . . . . I hope you will find some pleasant friends among the new students. Also I hope you will improve this pleasant weather to walk a good deal and to enjoy this beautiful weather . . . . Write again soon, and tell us all about yourself, and what you are doing this year in your studies. You don't know how much we think and talk of you, and desire your well-doing in every respect. Keep very near to your Saviour, dear Philly, and remember the sacred vows that are upon you, and you will surely

prosper. Good-night, my dear Philly, and pleasant dreams.  
 Whether waking or sleeping, never forget  
 Your ever loving Mother.<sup>1</sup>

His Mother's words, "Keep very near to your Saviour, dear Philly," were carried in his heart to his dying day.

Phillips' father was a businessman, dutiful towards his Church and his God. From him Phillips learned a concern for the world about him and an interest in his fellowman. His father was interested in the world of business, politics, and everyday happenings about him. He wrote to Phillips about elections, the struggle between the North and South, his son's sensitiveness in writing home to ask for money, and matters about the family. He, too, expressed the thoughts that he loved his son and was proud of him when Phillips was preparing himself for the ministry at the Seminary in Alexandria. His father closed his letter of October 27, 1857 to his son with the words, "Write often, and remember you are never for a moment forgotten in the family circle. Improve your time faithfully in your noble calling, and that you may improve is the constant prayer of your Affectionate father."<sup>2</sup>

Phillips attended the Boston Latin School. He was a good student, but did not excel.

In 1855 at the age of nineteen he graduated from Harvard College.

He began teaching in the Boston Latin School and was a failure

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<sup>1</sup>A. V. G. Allen, Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1900), I, 205.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

as a teacher. He was despondent at his failure and, yet, it was one of the many things that happened to him from which he profited. Dr. Alexander V. G. Allen, who wrote the classical biography on Phillips Brooks, has the following comment on this matter:

The failure of Phillips Brooks as a teacher in the Latin School was so conspicuous in Boston, and he was so widely known to a large circle of acquaintances in Boston, so great things also had been expected of him, that it was naturally a subject of much comment at the time, and could not be forgotten in after years. At first it had been an occasion of commiseration. But when he became distinguished as the unrivalled preacher it was still referred to, and used to point a moral.<sup>1</sup>

It was Dr. Walker, the President of Harvard College, who advised him to study for the ministry. Phillips later described this in a private letter, "President Walker encouraged me in choosing the ministry, but he was not enthusiastic; he was not an enthusiastic man, but he was distinctly encouraging."<sup>2</sup>

After making the decision, Phillips went to Dr. A. H. Vinton, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in Boston, the church in which he had been raised, seeking the steps to be taken. It is noted that Phillips first sought advice from a teacher rather than from his minister.

Although I found no record of her advising him at this time, undoubtedly his mother's influence was great in this decision.

He entered Virginia Theological School at Alexandria, Virginia in 1856 and graduated three years later. He was lonely there, particularly during his first two years, and he remained close to his family.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

His seminary days were a period of great inward development. There Phillips read profoundly. Greek and Latin were simply tools which opened up new fields of experience for him. He took time to think. He was an intellectual giant and found room for the intellect in his doctrine of man.

A classmate of his at seminary wrote years later: "The style of his essays had the grace of the after-sermons, a nameless quality that made some of us feel we must retire and begin over again."<sup>1</sup>

His writing was outstanding and he had a unique command of the English language.

Faith was the basis of his life. While he was still in Seminary he wrote that we need more faith upon earth and that we do not have the trust we ought to have in God. Like the late Archbishop William Temple, as Phillips matured his faith in God as his loving Father so developed that he had an unswerving confidence in his own capacity and ability, as if he felt that he could do all things through Him who loved him. With this faith in God and confidence in himself came a trust in the universe and his fellowman.

It is to be noted that there is an absence of the specific mention of Jesus Christ in his writings in seminary. However, his first sermon was entitled, "The Simplicity of Christ." It pleased his mother because Jesus Christ was made prominent. However, in later years, Phillips wrote the following about this sermon:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

I well remember the first sermon that I ever achieved. The text was from II Corinthians xi, 3, "The simplicity that is in Christ," and a cruel classmate's criticism of it was that "there was very little simplicity in the sermon and no Christ." I am afraid that he was right and I am sure that the sermon never was preached again. Its lack of simplicity and lack of Christ no doubt belonged together. It was probably an attempt to define doctrine instead of to show a man, a God, a Saviour.<sup>1</sup>

He began his ministry at the Church of the Advent, Philadelphia, on July 10, 1858. It was not a prominent church in the city, having one hundred and fifty communicants. His salary was less than two thousand dollars a year. Two years later he was offered five to six thousand dollars a year by Grace Episcopal Church, San Francisco, but he refused to leave the Church of the Advent.

The social issue of the day was slavery. While many other pulpits were silent about it, he gave forth no uncertain sound. Phillips saw the Civil War as a moral issue. God was in the conflict. Abraham Lincoln was an ideal of Phillips. He admired him as a man and as an American.

After reading the first call to Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia, he accepted the second call six months later on November 18, 1861. This had been a difficult decision. Upon his resignation, Dr. Vinton had recommended Phillips to rectorship of the Church of the Holy Trinity. Members of the congregation of Holy Trinity at times formed a considerable part of his listeners at the Advent. The motives which induced him to accept the call were several and were practical ones. In

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<sup>1</sup>A. V. G. Allen, Phillips Brooks, 1835-93 (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1907), p. 89.



preaching at the Advent, he was ministering to people who were not identifying themselves with the congregation. He needed a larger edifice for his Sunday hearers. The people of the Advent were unwilling to let him go, but he did, moving to a more prominent position in doing so.

Within a few years, Phillips became one of the most important men in Philadelphia. His church was always packed. He spoke at many and various public occasions.

The Civil War, with its issues, its tragedies and victories, entered and quickened his personality. His letters tell of his keen interest in the war. Dr. Allen wrote that the soul of the nation during these war years seemed to pass into the soul of Phillips Brooks. It taught him a greater regard for the cause of humanity and a deeper devotion.

In one sense the war gave him his opportunity. He was aroused by it to the highest pitch of enthusiasm; he became its representative and mouthpiece to the city of Philadelphia and finally he spoke to the country at large in a memorable way.<sup>1</sup>

He was a leader in the work among the Negroes. He saw, preached, and talked about the problem of the integration of the Negro into society. He preached among them and had Sunday School for them. He felt for them. The opening of the street cars to them in Philadelphia was a work in which Phillips was instrumental.

His interest in current affairs as a man of action is seen at

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

the time of the Battle of Gettysburg. Lee's army had invaded Pennsylvania, threatening Philadelphia. The North did not know where he would strike. An intimate friend of Phillips recorded the following in his diary about the events of that time:

The Quaker City was carrying non-resistance to its last consequence, was folding its hands and shaking in its shoes, and waiting for Providence or the general government to come to its rescue. Brooks, Cooper, and the rest of us assembled on a Monday morning in Cooper's study, waxed hot at the local inaction. We drew up a paper offering our services for the public defence. We would not take up arms, but we could shoulder shovels and dig trenches. With Brooks and the venerable Albert Barnes at the head of the procession we stormed the mayor's office, a hundred or more strong, and asked to be set at work on the defences of the city. We retired, bought our spades and haversacks, and waited for orders. The example served its purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The following entries in Phillips' pocket diary show his activities immediately after the Battle of Gettysburg:

Sunday, July 5, 1863. Fifth Sunday after Trinity. I spoke, and administered the communion. During the communion service news came of Lee's rout, and I announced it to the congregation. God be praised.

Monday, July 6, 1863. Evening. Started for the battlefield under the auspices of the Sanitary Commission. Arrived at Baltimore about four o'clock the next morning.

Tuesday, July 7, 1863. Spent all day making arrangements and trying to get off to Gettysburg. Started in freight train at seven o'clock P.M., and spent the night in the cars, arriving at Hanover at seven o'clock the next morning.

Wednesday, July 8, 1863. Almost all day at Hanover. Left for Gettysburg at five o'clock P.M. Arrived about seven. Slept in loft of a tar-shop.

Thursday, July 9, 1863. At Sanitary Commission Tent near the depot. Then all over the battlefield.

Friday, July 10, 1863. All day at the hospital of the Second Division of the Fifth Corps, distributing clothes and writing letters for the men. Very tired at night.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

Saturday, July 11, 1863. To the hospital of the Pennsylvania Reserves. P.M. among the rebel prisoners in the Third Corps. Terrible need and suffering.

Sunday, July 12, 1863. All day among the rebel prisoners in the Third Corps Hospital.

Monday, July 13, 1863. All day travelling to Philadelphia. Arrived about 1:30 P.M.<sup>1</sup>

The sudden death of Abraham Lincoln had a stirring effect upon Phillips. He wrote that the whole land was deep in sorrow and that there was nothing to do but to pray for help.

At the Church of the Holy Trinity on the Easter Day following the assassination of President Lincoln, Phillips stated his esteem for the dead President by making this prophetic statement:

When the character of Abraham Lincoln comes to be gathered up, it seems to me that this is what shall be said of him, that of all the men who have ever lived in these United States, and come forth into prominence before the world, he was the man most distinctly and in the best and truest sense an American; and he is to stand so before the nations in coming time.<sup>2</sup>

The sermon which he preached on the following Sunday, the First Sunday after Easter, April 23rd, on the character of Lincoln is ranked among his greatest sermons. He gave numerous addresses and prayers at occasions in honor of the late President. The most notable of these was his prayer at the Commemoration of the Harvard Soldiers at Cambridge on July 21st. This was a great day in the annals of Harvard University. Famous and unknown sons of Harvard from far and near were present for the occasion. General Meade and General Barlow were there. Addresses were given by General Barlow, General Devens, Governor Andrews, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 180.

President Hill. The Reverend George Putnam of Roxbury gave an address. Poems were read by Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, R. W. Emerson, Dr. O. W. Holmes; and James Russell Lowell read his famous Commemoration Ode. Phillips Brooks gave the opening prayer. To many this was the crowning event of the whole occasion, as this one testimony suggests:

When the "Amen" came, it seemed that the occasion was over, that the harmonies of the music had been anticipated, that the poem had been read and the oration already uttered, that after such a prayer every other exercise might well be dispensed with.<sup>1</sup>

Of that memorable occasion, the most famous of Harvard's great presidents, President Eliot, said:

It was the most impressive utterance of a proud and happy day. Even Lowell's Commemoration Ode did not at the moment so touch the hearts of his hearers; that one spontaneous and intimate expression of Brooks' noble spirit convinced all Harvard men that a young prophet had risen up in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Of this prayer no remaining record has been found.

Phillips went abroad for a year and returned to write "O Little Town of Bethlehem" in 1868.

The next year, 1869, marked a turning point in his life, his going to Trinity Church, Boston. He had refused the first call there, feeling that he couldn't do the job. Many letters urged him to come, while other letters advised him to save himself for New York.

He accepted the second call, preaching his first sermon there on Sunday, October 31st, on the text, St. John ix, 4,5: "I must work

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." Philadelphia had given him confidence, which Boston, his birthplace, would not have done. In Philadelphia, he was a reformer. In Boston, he was neither a moral, social, nor a religious reformer. He took Boston by storm. One observer said, "No one could question the genuineness of his eloquence or resist its witchery, and yet no one could touch the secret of his power."

The crowds gathered morning and evening to hear him. There were sewing girls and Boston clerks as well as men of leisure and of studies. It was said that the authority of the sexton seemed like an impertinence when he spoke. Pewholders would come early and still find their pews occupied with strangers. Mr. Dillon, the sexton, did the best he could to separate the people. They were indignant about the "grim sexton, who acted as if he owned the church."

In Mr. Dillon's view of the situation, the end to be aimed at was to reduce the numbers who sought admittance to the church. "He once came to me in the vestry room," said Mr. Brooks, "to tell me of a method he had devised for this purpose, 'when a young man and a young woman come together, I separate them'; and he expected me to approve the fiendish plan."<sup>1</sup>

Old Trinity Church burned down and the congregation worshipped in Huntington Hall for four years during the building of the new church building. It was ready for use in 1877.

Although the secret of his strength was difficult to measure, his effects upon people could not be doubted. Men described his appeal

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 236.

to them according to their own needs and standards, and he appealed to men of many different walks of life. Some thought his voice was a wonderful source of appeal. Others admired his literary merit. But others still had different opinions about the man's appeal.

"His power consists in his simplicity," said one, "in his earnestness and strength, exhibited in the expression of a theology free from the narrowness and technicalities of those dogmatic schemes which make religion ridiculous and weigh it down." Another said, "Of course he has a fine intellect, but it is the warm, earnest heart guiding the intellect that gives him such influence over his hearers." Still another: "He knows what is in us all. He speaks out of the common experience and comes right to the heart of men."<sup>1</sup>

In 1877, he went to New Haven to give his "Yale Lectures on Preaching," which were to become widely known. In them, he described preaching as "truth through personality" or "the communication of truth by man to men."

Two years later he presented the "Bohlen Lectures" at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Philadelphia. "The Influence of Jesus" is a study of the influence of Jesus upon the moral, social, emotional, and intellectual life of man. Dr. Allen called this book The Apologia of Phillips Brooks and described it as "the defence of himself and of his method, the exposition of his ideal of life, his final answer to the question of how to meet the doubt, the weakness, the skepticism of the time."<sup>2</sup>

His grief was deep upon the death of his mother on February 1, 1880, at the age of seventy-two. Her influence upon Phillips in the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 321.

molding of his character and philosophy of life is immeasurable. Her life had been centered upon the care of her family. She was not known to have accepted an invitation to any social function until her youngest child had grown up. Soon after her death, Phillips wrote to a friend, "The happiest part of my life has been my mother, and with God's help she will be more to me than ever."<sup>1</sup>

His reputation had spread abroad so that when he was in England and Scotland he preached at Westminster Abbey on the Fourth of July, 1880 delivering his famous sermon "The Candle of the Lord." On the following Sunday he preached before the Queen. It was the first time an American clergyman had done so.

Phillips was offered the chair of preacher and professor of Religious Ethics at Harvard University in 1881. Pressure was exerted upon him to accept that esteemed position. It was said that everyone in Boston discussed it, hardly inquiring of him his thoughts on the matter. Many letters came from men of distinction in all walks of life urging him to accept the invitation and informing him that the greatest religious opportunity in the country would be lost were he to decline. A spontaneous mass meeting of the students of Harvard, which was described as the largest such gathering ever, expressed not only the hope that he would come but the conviction that he could not refuse. On the other side, the bishop of the diocese wrote him asking him to stay at Trinity Church. The vestry and the congregation of Trinity

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 342.



Church made it evident that they felt it was his duty to remain. Even the Governor of the Commonwealth, Hon. John D. Long, who was not an Episcopalian, wrote urging him to remain in Boston.

It seems to me in the interest of the Commonwealth, with its population accumulating and its young men gathering in its capital, that your close relation to them should not be lost. . . . But your reach in Cambridge will be nothing compared with what it is in Boston, extending to homes, families, the shop, the counting house, and every fibre of the city. I cannot help feeling that to change would limit and not enlarge your work. I know your own judgment is best, but I think you will pardon my suggestion which is certainly sincere.<sup>1</sup>

A mass meeting was held in Boston in Huntington Hall, at which hundreds of young men pleaded that he stay at Trinity Church. The members of his own family were opposed to his going. There was also the consideration of what would happen to the growing influence of Trinity Church if he were to withdraw to the seclusion of the university. It was a choice which almost pulled him in two, but he reached the decision that he should stay at Trinity. It is likely that the deciding factor was that he felt that to go would be thinking of himself too much. By his staying there was the possibility that "someone in the back pew might hear the Gospel for the first time."

In the summer of 1882, Phillips went abroad for a year, spending three months in Germany, India, and England, and a shorter time in Spain. His plan was to learn for himself, by observation and inquiry, how the people in these countries were living and thinking. In his writings about his travels, he expressed a deep respect for German

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 356.



scholarship and a more favorable impression of Buddhism than of the Indian religion. In England, he met Mr. Gladstone, who had been reading his sermons with great interest. He also met Robert Browning for the second time, and began a friendship with Tennyson, who wrote of their time together, "The few hours that I spent at Freshwater in your company will always be present with me."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Allen writes that upon his return from abroad Phillips entered the third phase of his preaching ministry. The first is described as the one in which he wrote his most beautiful sermons, full of the poetry of life and the divine allegory of life. In the second period he dealt with the forces which were undermining faith. Now he fell back to the simplest issues of life, with the simplest truths being the main themes of his teaching. He told one of his friends that he had given up writing essays and was going to preach sermons. To help men live as apostles of Jesus Christ was his objective in every sermon.

One of the outstanding marks of the person and ministry of Phillips Brooks was his ecumenicity. He was interested in the furtherance of God's truth in the world and considered himself a partner to anyone who manifested a part of that truth. He had respect for both the monk in the monastery and a sincere minister of the Word, regardless of his religious heritage or affiliations. His words of praise upon the death of the Rev. James Freeman Clarke, an esteemed Unitarian

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 410.

minister of Boston, serve to illustrate this quality.

I cannot stand here today without a tribute of affectionate and reverent remembrance to Dr. James Freeman Clarke, the minister of the Church of the Disciples, the friend and helper of souls. . . . He belonged to the whole Church of Christ. Through him his Master spoke to all who had ears to hear. Especially he was a living epistle to the Church of Christ which is in Boston. . . . Let us thank our Heavenly Father for the life, the work, the inspiration, of his true servant, his true saint, James Freeman Clarke.<sup>1</sup>

His rich ministry continued at Trinity Church. Everywhere he was in demand as a speaker. He was now more extemporaneous in his delivery. He traveled widely going to England again and to Japan.

In 1886 he was elected Assistant Bishop of Pennsylvania. Before the election he wrote a clergy friend in Philadelphia that he was not made for such a fate as being a bishop. For this office, he said that he was neither suited nor inclined. He tried to head off his own election by urging the support of another man, but still he was elected. He declined the office, saying that he was not made for it and that he thought he could do better work elsewhere.

In the spring of 1891, after twenty-two years as Rector of Trinity Church, Phillips was elected Bishop of the Diocese of Massachusetts on the first ballot with a large majority of clergy and a still larger majority of laity. He accepted this call and the rejoicing was great throughout the land. His many friends believed that this would enlarge the scope of his influence, the expansion of which

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 508.

was then immeasurable. The letters and notes of congratulation at this time indicated his vast popularity among men of all faiths. It was said that no Bishop of the American Church was ever called to his high office with such acclaim.

The colored people spoke through one of their representatives, declaring, "The negroes of the South rejoice with me in wishing you joy."<sup>1</sup> A prominent layman of the Congregational Church wrote:

I want to add my voice to the general Laus Deo, Deus vobiscum. I am so thankful you are elected bishop, not of Massachusetts, but of the Church Universal. All of us who share in your scholarly liberality, of all denominations, will call you our Bishop. May God make you Bishop of all souls, and may all humble and good men love and honor you more and more!<sup>2</sup>

Dr. James Russell Lowell wrote Phillips the following note:

Dear Doctor Brooks, Though I do not belong to the flock which will be guided by your crook, I cannot help writing a line to say how proud I am of "our" bishop.

Faithfully yours, J. R. Lowell<sup>3</sup>

However, there were also voices raised against him, claiming that Dr. Brooks was a most unfit man to be a bishop as he deemed the miracle to be unimportant and in the life of Christ unessential. The greatest opposition was that he did not believe in apostolic succession as indispensably necessary to the existence of Christ's Church. The rumor went around that the Nicene creed was not recited at Trinity Church. He was accused of being an Arian and a Pelagian, holding that man was sufficient for himself and that God had no connection with

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 586.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 587.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 588.

human salvation.

Phillips met these accusations and questions with no reply. There grew the resentment in the Episcopal Church that it should be so misrepresented and that any man in its fold should receive such treatment. Phillips' defense by those who disagreed with him can be represented in a letter by the Reverend John Henry Hopkins which appeared in the New York Tribune on June 1st:

Our Church is a comprehensive Church; and that means that there is room in her communion for a great variety of opinions on religious matters. We have three well-known parties, High, Low, and Broad. I am a High Churchman,—about as high as they make them. Had I been a member of the Massachusetts convention, I should never, under any circumstances, have voted for Dr. Brooks. But when he had been elected I should have signed his testimonials with pleasure, rejoicing in the elevation of one who is recognized on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean as a preacher now without a living superior, and whose high-toned, stainless life is acknowledged by all. . . . When asked for "explanations," etc., I am delighted that Dr. Brooks had none to give. No bishop-elect ought ever to give any. If he can honestly make the answers put in his mouth at the time of his consecration, it is enough. . . . Anonymous letters should be treated, in such a matter as this, with perfect contempt,—and all are anonymous whose writers are not named and known. . . . Especially is this the case when these anonymous writers display such abysmal ignorance of the very points in theology which they try to handle.<sup>1</sup>

By June 4th, it was known that a majority of votes of the standing committee had been cast in favor of the bishop-elect. The Bishops' votes were slow in coming in and it was not until July 10th that Dr. Brooks was informed by the Presiding Bishop that an election had been confirmed by a majority of the bishops.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 591.

On October 11th, he officiated as Rector of Trinity Church for the last time. On the following Wednesday, October 14th, he was consecrated Bishop of Massachusetts in the same church. It was the popular feeling that the "Universal Church" was represented in the consecration of Phillips Brooks. It is written that it was a state and civic event as well as an act of the Church. The governor of the Commonwealth, the mayor of Boston, and the president of Harvard College were all invited guests. The City of Boston had sent flowers to decorate the church within and without.

As the Bishop of Massachusetts, he continued to show his contempt for sham and show and remained a man true to his high ideals and principles. He thought that it was a pity that the episcopate should be so involved with clothes. He refused to use the event of the Church Congress in Washington, over which he presided, as an occasion to proclaim his orthodoxy, thus quieting some of the charges which had been made against him before his consecration. His address was based upon the text: "Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."

As Bishop, he has been described as showing a tendency to be a strict canonist. He wished it to be understood that deacons were to go where they were ordered. He was practical in his suggestions, telling the students at the Theological School in Cambridge in regard to the legibility of handwriting that small causes lead to great failures.

In January he became seriously ill of the grippe and never fully

recovered from the effects of this illness. He was some time recovering from the despondency which often accompanies the disease. That spring he consented to take the Friday Evening Lenten Lectures at Trinity Church as that church was still without a rector. He continued to accept numerous responsibilities and speaking engagements in addition to carrying the load of his office. The Diocese enjoyed a vigorous numerical growth under his leadership. He reported at the Diocesan convention that in the seven months of his consecration 2,127 persons were confirmed. This is to be compared with 1,535 confirmations of the previous year. The number of clergy increased from 192 to 205 and the number of candidates for orders from twenty-five to thirty-six.

In the summer of 1892, Bishop Brooks made his last visit to England. Even after his return, he appeared tired, and his heavy schedule precluded the chances of his regaining his health to the full. He was depressed and lonely during these last months. He gave the prayer and the address at the watch-night service on New Years Eve, 1893, at Trinity Church.

At the consecration service of St. Mary's Church for Sailors in East Boston on January 14th, a window was open in the roof and the cold winter air blew on the heads of those present. On the following Sunday, although ill, he drove from Hyde Park to Dedham in an open sleigh. On January 17th, he made a visitation to the Church of the Good Shepherd in Boston—his last visitation. After a brief confinement in bed, he died on the following Monday, January 23rd, at about seven in the

morning. His symptoms had a diphtheritic character.

His funeral service was held at Trinity Church on Thursday, January 26, 1893. The whole scene resembled in splendor the day of his consecration. Dignitaries of many walks of life came to pay their respects to a great man. Some estimated that there were twenty thousand people in Copley Square outside the Church. His body was buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge in the same lot with his father and mother and two brothers, George and Frederick.

His touch with the common people is carried in the story that a Boston cabbie leaned over to share his grief with an unknown passenger by saying, "Have you heard the terrible news, governur, Phillips Brooks is dead."

His death was felt literally on almost all continents. One of the finest tributes to him are the words of the Rt. Rev. A. W. Thorold, the English Bishop of Winchester, who dedicated a volume of sermons to Phillips Brooks:

TO THE DEAR MEMORY OF  
 PHILLIPS BROOKS  
 BISHOP OF MASSACHUSETTS  
 STRONG, FEARLESS, TENDER, ELOQUENT  
 INCAPABLE OF MEANNESS  
 BLAZING WITH INDIGNATION AT ALL KINDS OF WRONG  
 HIS HEART AND MIND DEEP AND WIDE AS  
 THE OCEAN AT HIS DOOR  
 SIMPLE AND TRANSPARENT AS A CHILD  
 KEEN WITH ALL THE KEENNESS OF HIS RACE  
 THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED  
 BY A BROTHER ACROSS THE WATER

WHO CHERISHES HIS FRIENDSHIP AS A  
TREASURE LAID UP IN HEAVEN  
AT THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST<sup>1</sup>

In the side yard of Trinity Church on Copley Square in Boston, a bronze statue by the great sculptor, St. Gaudens, stands symbolizing a great truth. There is the imposing and impressive figure of Phillips Brooks, massive in stature and standing as he preaches the Word of God. Behind this figure stands a second statue, the right hand of which is on the shoulder of Phillips Brooks. It is a statue of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>A. V. G. Allen, Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1900), II, 946.



## CHAPTER II

### THE WORKS OF PHILLIPS BROOKS ON JESUS CHRIST

#### I. JESUS, THE MAN

Phillips Brooks believed that Jesus was human. He felt that the life of Jesus was a complete human life in every respect of the word. To Phillips Brooks Jesus was not a masquerading spirit. He was made of human flesh and blood. He was subject to all the pleasures and pains of the physical body. As a complete human, Phillips also believed that Jesus knew the emotional feelings of joy and sorrow which are common to the members of the human race. Although the humanness of Jesus was an axiom in his thinking, Phillips took pains in his writing to describe what he believed the nature of Jesus Christ's humanness to be.

Phillips associated the physical nature of Jesus with His pleasures and sufferings, stressing his feelings that Jesus had a real human body. He wrote that the pleasures and sufferings of Jesus could not have come to Him, or to any man, except through the medium of a human body.

I do not know the meaning of it all, but I know that what came to the spiritual came in some echo to the physical, and the body shared the gladness of the soul. And when we turn the page again and look into Gethsemane, the same completeness of life is there. However it may be swathed about and purified and glorified by the suffering of the consecrated soul, there

was physical pain there in the Garden on the night before the cross.<sup>1</sup>

Long and painful physical hunger, as well as physical exhaustion, were realities of the experience of Jesus for He had a human body which wore the full capacity of physical suffering. That Jesus could experience physical pleasures of the body was suggested by Phillips when he quoted the following:

One day He told them what He had often overheard: "The Son of man is come eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber."<sup>2</sup>

Although this accusation was brutal and full of hostility, Phillips believed that it still gives us a picture from a foe's pen of a man with a physical body who could suffer and could enjoy by means of his body. His foes in their attempt to mock Him give us the unmistakable impression that they believed that He was indeed capable of physical pleasure through His eating and drinking.

Phillips also used the story of the sick woman who touched the hem of His garment to illustrate the physical sensibility of Jesus. When Jesus turned and asked, "Who touched Me?" He was indicating the sensitiveness of His body to physical touch, which is more proof of His being truly human.

According to Phillips Brooks, another aspect of the humanness of Jesus was found in His emotional life. That Jesus had the capacity

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<sup>1</sup>Phillips Brooks, The Influence of Jesus (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1879), p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

to love others was a mark of His human nature. He felt that the most prominent and absorbing affection of His life was the pure love that He had for His Heavenly Father. He also referred to the family life of Jesus as bringing Him both pleasure and suffering, which would only be possible because of His affections for those whom He loved. Phillips spoke of the human emotions of Jesus being moved by the responses of his family to Him:

He presses His brother's hand with brotherly affection. His brother's sneer wounds Him as no stranger's can. His mother's sorrow enters into its own secret chamber of sympathy in Him where no other sorrow can intrude. And yet all the while, with all the instinctive value which He gave to them for their own sake, these home affections all are ties to bind Him to humanity, windows through which He looks into the depths of human life, interpretations to His soul of the wider brotherhood in the vaster family.<sup>1</sup>

Phillips felt that Jesus must have thrilled to being led into the water at the hands of John, His kinsman, and that Jesus must have suffered emotional depths when He learned of John's murder in prison. Phillips also believed that Jesus must have suffered great pain when His brothers did not believe in Him, and at the time of His crucifixion when he looked down from the cross to see His mother and to give her to the care of His disciple. These, in addition to many other instances such as His Temptations, are indications that Jesus knew the emotions of a real human life.

In addition to the physical and emotional aspects of His life

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

indicating the fullness of His humanity, Phillips Brooks thought that the moral joys and pains of Jesus were a definite part of His humanness. Jesus felt a pleasure in the rightness and a pain in the wrongness of the world about Him. It brought Jesus joy when a man was good because of what it meant to the man and because the man glorifies His Father in heaven. In a similar manner, Phillips believed that the wickedness of a man wounded Jesus because it is a degradation to the man who does it and an insult to God. The capacities of Jesus for physical, emotional, and moral pleasure and suffering was to Phillips Brooks a part of the proof of His complete humanness.

However, he does not stop by believing that Jesus was a complete human life, but continues a step farther by feeling that Jesus was human nature at its very best. To Phillips, Jesus was absolutely perfect man. He was truly human in thought and feeling and character, and the pattern and fulfillment of humanity. Jesus represents human nature at its very best and truest. The humanity of Jesus was to him humanity as it really is.

Probably the best single work of Phillips Brooks on the idea of Jesus as the "perfect man" is his famous sermon, "The Manliness of Christ." In this sermon which has as its text St. Luke 24:39, "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have," he said:

The Incarnation, then, the beginning of the earthly life of Christ was the fulfillment, the filling full of a human nature by Divinity. It made the man in whom the miracle

occurred, absolutely perfect man. It didn't make him something else than man. In Jesus Christ, we see not a distortion of humanity, but a true development of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

He saw in the humanity of Jesus the pattern for all humanity. The proof-marks of the humanity of Jesus were His emotions which were "deeper and richer things in Him than in ordinary men, in proportion to the depth and richness of His human nature and the divinity that was mingled with it."<sup>2</sup> Phillips Brooks felt that the perfection of Jesus's nature was shown in the perfection of His wishes and will to do what His Heavenly Father wanted Him to do. Indeed, Jesus Christ was true and perfect man.

Often men do not accept the qualities of Jesus as being truly manly. Rather, we set up our own standards of manhood by which we judge Jesus. In "The Manliness of Christ," he speaks of the character of Jesus satisfying the highest conception of our humanity, but only the highest, for our lower notions of manliness are puzzled by it. Phillips describes manliness as "the sum of the best qualities which characterizes our humanity, joined in their true proportion."<sup>3</sup> Although the standards of Jesus make our old standards of manhood seem poor, still we cling to them and give our admiration to incomplete character.

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<sup>1</sup>Phillips Brooks, The Candle of the Lord and Other Sermons (second series; New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1881), p. 255.

<sup>2</sup>Phillips Brooks, "Christ's Wish For Man," The Purpose and Use of Comfort and Other Sermons (first series; New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1878), p. 301.

<sup>3</sup>Brooks, The Candle of the Lord and Other Sermons, op. cit., p. 255.

For example, when we are hurt by another we know the manly thing to do is to forgive, but we give in to a lower nature, striking a wrongful blow and saying, "I know it is not Christian, but it is manly."<sup>1</sup>

However, Phillips points out that there are perhaps three things above all others by which men think that they can recognize manliness. They are independence, bravery, and generosity. Jesus excelled in all these manly qualities. He was independent, standing alone and saying, "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me cannot be my disciple."<sup>2</sup> Men saw the courage of Jesus when He stood on the hill at Nazareth among a hooting crowd of enemies. They saw Him calm in the boat on the lake during the storm, and they saw Gethsemane. In Jesus we see the generosity of a man "with an open, tolerant, and kindly temper, that welcomes confidence, that overlooks faults, that makes much of any good in other men, and that easily forgives wrong."<sup>3</sup>

Because the manhood of Jesus exemplified and possessed the qualities of true manhood, Phillips believed that His manhood is the pattern for all humanity.

We are to recognize Him as manhood, He was truly man, but man at His very best. By knowing Him, we see manhood anew and far more deeply. The real truth about the manhood of Christ seems to be this: that He is so like us that He makes us know that we may be like Him, and so unlike us that He makes us know that we must be unlike our present selves before we can be like Him.<sup>4</sup>

Closely related to the thought of the manhood of Jesus being the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 261.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 262.

pattern for all humanity is the idea of Phillips Brooks that Jesus has shown us through His manhood the possibilities of man, that man's moral range and reach is practically without limits. He felt that man's power to conquer temptation, of despising danger, and of being true to principle has never been so indicated as in the manhood of Jesus.

However, it should be clearly understood that Phillips Brooks did not believe that man, as he is upon the earth today, is without sin and without the need of a Saviour. When Phillips Brooks spoke of Jesus as being the pattern of man, "He saw in the Incarnation, not man as we find him, but man as he can be, under the inspiration of Jesus Christ, not man 'in esse' but 'in posse.'<sup>1</sup>

In summarizing this section on "Jesus, The Man," we note that Phillips Brooks saw Jesus Christ as truly man, with the physical, emotional, and moral characteristics of humanity, and as perfect man, with the highest qualities of manhood at its best, so that His manhood is the perfect pattern of manhood for humanity itself.

## II. JESUS, THE SON OF GOD

At the time of his election to the episcopate, many questions were raised concerning the theology of Phillips Brooks by those who opposed him and who thought that he was not an orthodox believer. He was accused of holding the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation as unessential. Letters were written to him inquiring if he believed

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<sup>1</sup>Francis Gerald Ensley, "Phillips Brooks and the Incarnation," Religion in Life, XX (Summer, 1951), 354.



in the Divinity of Jesus Christ. It was alleged that he was an Arian in his theology. But Phillips Brooks was a believer in the Incarnation, as we shall see from his own words, and Arius did not. Dr. Allen defends him against these false charges of unorthodoxy regarding his beliefs about the nature of Jesus's humanity and divinity with the following words:

Phillips Brooks believed that Christ as the Eternal Son was coequal with the Father and of the same essence, and this was what Arius denied. Phillips Brooks also accepted the full humanity of Christ, a truth which Arius did not hold. Phillips Brooks was Athanasian in his theology. Indeed since the days of Athanasius, there had been no one who held the doctrine of the person of Christ in the spirit of Athanasius more firmly than he.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Bishop Phillips was friendly with some Unitarian ministers, participating in worship services with them and respecting their abilities and integrity, made him the target of many charges of unorthodoxy regarding his beliefs about the divinity of Christ. However, such charges were unfounded and the products of guilt-by-association thinking. The best proof of this is found in the works of Phillips Brooks themselves.

One of the marks of his theology about the Divinity of Jesus Christ is his belief about the Person of Jesus, as seen in numerous statements about Jesus.

It was said that Dr. Gladstone based his faith and hope upon "the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ." To Phillips Brooks, this

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<sup>1</sup>A. V. G. Allen, Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1900), II, 841.



would not quite be the answer but Christ Himself. It was not the doctrine about Jesus which manifested God to him, but Jesus Himself. He once put it in these words, "This is what I see about God when I look at Christ. It is God that I see there. Not a doctrine about Him, but it is He, the light of God in the face of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> He believed the cross of Jesus shows us not merely what Jesus does, but what Jesus is. It was not the power, the wisdom, nor the teachings about Jesus which was of greatest importance about Him to Bishop Brooks, rather it was Jesus Himself, as he said, "He brings us not only His Power, not only His Wisdom, He brings us Himself, and He says: 'He that believeth in Me, though He were dead yet shall he live.'"<sup>2</sup>

In an address in which he asked the question "What is the Christian religion?", he answered:

It is the simple following of the divine person, Jesus Christ, who, entering into our humanity, has made evident two things—the love of God for all humanity, and the power of that humanity to answer to the love of God. . . . It is not primarily a truth; it is a person, it is He who walked in Galilee.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus Christ was more than the world's greatest teacher to Phillips Brooks. He placed Jesus in an entirely different class from Socrates or Plato. It was not only what Jesus did, what He taught, His

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 522.

<sup>2</sup>Phillips Brooks, The More Abundant Life, ed. W. Jay (New York: Dutton and Company, 1902), p. 213.

<sup>3</sup>Phillips Brooks, "Thought and Action," Addresses (New York: Saalfeld and Fitch, 1893), p. 45.

power to influence others, but His Person or who He was, which made Phillips Brooks call Him "Saviour." ". . . as if it were a message entrusted to the Son of God when He came to be the Savior of mankind. It was not only something which He knew and taught; it was something which He was."<sup>1</sup>

A second mark of his theology about the Divinity of Jesus Christ is his reference to Jesus Christ as the Son of God. His belief in the unique sonship of Jesus to His Heavenly Father indicates and supports his belief in the divinity of Jesus.

Because Phillips Brooks held as a theological axiom that all men are the sons of God and as sons have the capacity to respond to God's love for them, some men have accused him of giving too much power to man and of putting Jesus and man in the same category. To Bishop Brooks the Sonship of Jesus was a unique one and different from the sonship of man. He looked upon Christ's difference in Sonship from the other prophets and men of God who had lived before Him as it is expressed in the parable of the vineyard, where Jesus compared those who had gone before him to servants sent by God; when servant after servant had been sent, at last God sent His Son.<sup>2</sup>

Phillips Brooks believed that the Sonship of Jesus held the secret of His holiness. The will to do His Father's business was the sum of all His life. His unique Sonship is seen in the words:

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<sup>1</sup>Brooks, The Influence of Jesus, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 21:33.

His incarnate days, with all their common duties held and illuminated in that high consciousness of sonship, must have been one with the eternity of the past and the eternity that was to be.<sup>1</sup>

The Sonship of Jesus was a perfect Sonship because God the Father dwelt so completely in the human flesh of Jesus of Nazareth.

A third mark of the theology of Phillips Brooks about the divinity of Jesus is his emphasis in preaching and writing about the Incarnation. He often spoke of the fact that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. The Incarnation was at the very heart of his preaching and it meant to him that "God and man had met together in the person of Christ,--the fullness of God and the complete perfection of humanity."<sup>2</sup>

He often mentioned the naturalness of the Incarnation and its essential harmony with human life and the other orders of life in the world. The quietness with which God went about the Incarnation was of significance to him. There was no fanfare, no great world-wide announcements, but the event took place quietly in a little, insignificant country.

Phillips Brooks describes the wondrous event in these words:

Think of it. God had stood before men from the first, and they had looked with awe and adoration upon Him. Then came the Incarnation. Here was God in the flesh. Solemnly that of the Divine which was capable of being wrapped in and of living through the human, was brought close within that wondrous life lived in a human body. There was the God we were to imitate, to grow like to, to take into ourselves until He filled us with

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<sup>1</sup>Brooks, The Influence of Jesus, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>Allen, Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, op. cit., II, p. 517.

Himself. It was the incarnate God; it was the God in the flesh that was to enter into man.<sup>1</sup>

The Incarnation, then, the beginning of the earthly life of Christ, was the fulfillment, the filling full, of a human life by Divinity.<sup>2</sup>

Look at Christ's Incarnation. In Him we know that God came into the world. And see how it was that God, in Him, appealed to and diffused Himself through human life.<sup>3</sup>

The Incarnation, not as a principle or a theological doctrine to be believed, but as a fact, as a matter of truth and of experience, was at the center of his teaching and life. To him the Incarnation is about Jesus Christ, namely that in Him divinity and humanity were united.

To Phillips Brooks, the truth of the divinity of Jesus did not hang on a few texts of Scriptures but it shone through His thoughts about Himself and the work He had to do. The proof of Jesus's divinity was in the "Person" of Jesus, His unique Sonship, and the Incarnation.

### III. JESUS, THE PROCLAIMER OF TRUTH

A seemingly essential part of any complete work of a man on Jesus Christ is an inquiry into what this man believes about Jesus as

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<sup>1</sup>Brooks, The More Abundant Life, op. cit., p. 232.

<sup>2</sup>Phillips Brooks, "The Manliness of Christ," The Candle of the Lord and Other Sermons (second series; New York: Dutton and Company, 1881), p. 255.

<sup>3</sup>Phillips Brooks, "Brotherhood in Christ," Visions and Tasks and Other Sermons (fourth series; New York: Dutton and Company, 1887), p. 90.

a Messenger from God and what this man believes His message to be. At this point this paper will cover some of the thoughts which Phillips Brooks had about Jesus as a Proclaimer of the truths of God and some of the truths which He told to the world.

Bishop Brooks thought Jesus Christ to be "The Light of the World" in the sense that He brought God's truths to the world in utterance and revelation and fulfillment of capacities which were in the very nature of the world.<sup>1</sup> As the Great Truth Proclaimer, Jesus revealed God's truths to the world by bringing them to light as they dwelt in the world itself. Truth was in the world and Jesus simply brought it to people so they could recognize it. The greatest truth of all was the truth of the existence of God. Phillips Brooks answered the question, "Why do I believe in God?" with the words, "because this world is inexplicable without Him, and explicable with Him, and because Jesus Christ believed in Him; and it was Jesus Christ that showed me that this world demanded God and was inexplicable without Him."<sup>2</sup> So it was Jesus Christ who declared to Phillips Brooks the necessity of God.

Phillips Brooks believed that truth cannot be held by man through his intellect alone. His doctrine of the intellectual life was that in the highest things the intellect can never work alone for

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<sup>1</sup>Phillips Brooks, The Light of the World and Other Sermons (fifth series; New York: Dutton and Company, 1890), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Phillips Brooks, "Thought and Action," Addresses (New York: Saalfeld and Fitch, 1893), p. 55.

the discovery of truth. Truth must be the possession of the whole nature. The intellect must be supported by the richness of the affections and the power of the will or perfect truth is not attained by man. Jesus appealed not only to man's intellect, but also to his affections and will. Because He appealed to the whole man, and not just to the intellectual side of man, Phillips put Jesus in a class by Himself, far above any of the great intellectual giants such as Socrates or Plato. He was not a mere message-bringer, but the eternal truth showing itself first in character before presenting itself in specific propositions.

Bishop Brooks declared that Jesus admitted with perfect frankness the limits of his knowledge. There were some things which He did not know. "Of that day and hour knoweth not the Son, but the Father," he quoted Him as saying.<sup>1</sup> But Jesus was always behind His words. He possessed men first and then His words took possession of men. With Jesus, it was not a matter of truth coming from simple brain to simple brain, as the reasoning of Euclid comes to his students, but from total character to total character. Phillips Brooks illustrates this by the comparison between the talk Socrates had with Simmias and Cebes and his other friends in the prison in Athens just before he drank the hemlock and the last talk of Jesus with His disciples before His crucifixion. This comparison makes apparent to its reader the likeness and the difference of the two great teachers. He shows how Socrates in his replies

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<sup>1</sup>Brooks, The Influence of Jesus, op. cit., p. 233.

to his students and friends appeals to their intellects alone. He reasons and argues, while Jesus speaks to the heart. Jesus appeals to the reason, too, only it is to the spiritual reason, with the will and the affections being partners of the brain. Phillips Brooks writes that "the difference of result is, in one word, the difference between convincing the intellect and making the man believe."<sup>1</sup> Following are several comparisons and conclusions in the words of Phillips Brooks.

Socrates draws in confused but elaborate detail the road to Hades and its geography. Jesus says, "In My Father's house are many mansions," and "Father, I will that they whom Thou has given Me be with Me where I am." Socrates is noble in his frank uncertainty about life. "Whether I tried in the right way and with what success I shall know certainty when I arrive there, if it please God. Jesus is divine in His certainty." "O righteous Father, the world hath not know Thee, but I have known Thee." "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." . . . the sage consoles his disciples by sending them out to find other teachers. "Greece is a wide place, Cebes, and there are in it many good men. And there are, besides, many races of barbarians, all of whom are to be explored in search of some who can perform such a charm as we have spoken of." The Savior declares simply, "I will not leave you comfortless. I will come unto you." . . . And, if we let our eye run beyond the times when both the tragedies—the tragedy of Athens and the tragedy of Jerusalem—were finished, and see what thoughts of the two sufferers were left behind them, we hear Phaedo closing his long story with these words: "This was the end, Echecrates, of our friend: of all the men whom we have known, the best, the wisest, and the most just." Nay; before the poison was given by the jailer's hand we hear him say to his great prisoner, "I have found you the most generous and gentle and the best of all who ever came here." And then our thoughts run to Jerusalem, and hear the centurion who commanded the soldiers who crucified Jesus say, as he sees the Crucified give up the ghost, "Truly this was the Son of God."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 242.



I do not know what to say to any man who does not feel the difference. I can almost dream what Socrates would say to any man who said there was no difference between Jesus and him. But how shall we state the difference? One is divine and human; the other is human only. One is Redeemer; the other is philosopher. One is inspired, and the other questions. One reveals, and the other argues. These statements, doubtless, are all true. And in them all there is wrapped up this, which is the truth of all the influence of Jesus over men's minds, that where Socrates brings an argument to meet an objection, Jesus always brings a nature to meet a nature,—a whole being which the truth has filled with strength, to meet another whole being which error has filled with feebleness.<sup>1</sup>

Phillips Brooks repeated many times in his works his feeling and thought that the central message of Jesus Christ to man was that God is man's father and we are the sons of God. This is the truth, which the Proclaimer of Truth brought to man. He points out that many of the things which Jesus said and did are an assurance to us of God's Fatherhood over all of us and our sonship. The Prodigal Son Story to him was an assurance from Jesus that the two sons could never lose their father's love. He reminds us that Jesus began the Lord's Prayer with the statement of the Fatherhood of God, "Our Father who art in heaven." Even after His resurrection, Jesus proclaims the oneness of His life and His disciples by declaring, "I ascend unto my Father and to your Father."<sup>2</sup> Phillips Brooks thought that we could not be wrong in saying positively that to Jesus Himself the truth that man was God's child by nature was the great fact of our existence. And to this he added that "the desire that man might be God's child in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



reality was the motive of His own life and work."<sup>1</sup> He felt that at the heart of each man's knowledge lay the idea of Jesus that man is the son of God. He saw Jesus living this truth by his own actions towards every human He met. "He was full of reverence for the nature of the men and women whom He met."<sup>2</sup> In speaking on the value of the human soul, he declared that being able to see the preciousness of the human soul was a reason for the effective ministry of Jesus. He never lost sight of the individual as a child of God, and as a child of God, a person of infinite worth. He wrote:

But we are sure that he has put his hand most certainly upon the central power of Christ's ministry, who holds up before us the intense value which the Saviour always set upon the souls for which He lived and died.<sup>3</sup>

Another truth which Jesus proclaimed to man which should be mentioned at this point is that He declared the forgiveness of God. Phillips said that Jesus declares forgiveness, taking away the fear of punishment. Jesus calls on us to believe that we are pardoned and, in this way, reveals God's love to us. He proclaimed the truth that we do not live in God's wrath but in His love as forgiven sinners when we turn to Him seeking pardon for our offenses against Him. Jesus brought us from the fear of the divine displeasure to the assurance of the divine love, and so keeps us from falling.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Phillips Brooks, Lectures on Preaching (New York: Dutton and Company, 1877), p. 279.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 256.

In the mind and heart of Phillips Brooks, Jesus Christ was the best and greatest teacher because He was the one who harmoniously blended knowing power with loving power. The best teacher to him is the one who "knows and loves,"<sup>1</sup> and it was Jesus Christ who was full of Grace and Truth.

#### IV. JESUS, THE WORKER

In addition to declaring in his works who Jesus was and what message He brought to man, Phillips Brooks was interested in the works which Jesus did. This concluding division of this paper describes Jesus as a worker in the writings of Phillips Brooks. Because of the inter-relatedness of who Jesus was, His message, and His works, it is difficult to keep the subject matter of each section exclusively in that section.

Bishop Brooks thought of Christianity itself not primarily as a system of doctrine, but as a personal force, behind and in which there is lying one great inspiring idea, which it is the work of the personal force to impress upon the life of man. The personal force is the nature of Jesus, full of humanity, full of divinity, and powerful with a love for man which combines in itself every element that enters into love of the completest kind. He saw Jesus Christ to be this powerful force, full of love, and working to bring and to show that love to

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<sup>1</sup>Phillips Brooks, "Visions and Tasks," Selected Sermons, ed. the Rt. Rev. William Scarlett (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1950), p. 144.

all mankind. Of the work of Jesus Christ, he once said:

There has been one manifestation of the spiritual life in this world that surpasses all other manifestations. Whatever may be our theological conceptions of Him, we know that Jesus Christ stands as the supreme inspirer of the spiritual life; and he who would be today the guide and friend of those who would live in the spirit must of necessity turn to Jesus Christ and put himself in relation to His spiritual life. There is where the minister becomes a Christian minister--in the simple desire, through contact with the life and work and death of Jesus Christ, to stir the soul and the spiritual life of man. The testimony of all ages is that there has been no such spiritual power as Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

He believed that Jesus was the perfect pastor by His showing men what they were and what they might become. It was the work of Jesus to reveal to man his imperfect condition and his infinite hope. Phillips Brooks believed that this is a continuing work of Jesus and thought it was the work of the Christian minister to bring men to Christ that He might continue this work in them. As the Perfect Pastor, Jesus does the work of showing other pastors of His flock how they might become full of reverence for the nature of the men and women whom they meet. He saw the work of Jesus as His giving His life completely from beginning to end in service of His fellowmen. His purpose of consecration and emancipation was service to his fellowman, and He gave Himself, as the Perfect Servant, because He is absolutely the Child of God, not just in potentiality, but in essence.

Frequently did he speak of the work of Jesus as giving strength

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<sup>1</sup>John R. Mott (ed.), "The Minister and His People," an essay by Phillips Brooks, Claims and Opportunities of the Christian Ministry (New York: Association Press, 1913), p. 92.

and bringing and giving life to man. He said that the greatest work of Christ for us is not an outward but an inward strength which He brings to man. It enters in and changes the nature. It is not only a buttress to sustain but food to change. Christ comes into a man and strengthens him by His incorporated life. He spoke of Christ as the Food of Man which like true food enters into us and becomes truly ours while it is still His strength. He believed that it was the work of Christ to make us strong and said that "to feed on Christ, then, is to get His strength into us to be our strength."<sup>1</sup> The strength of Christ which is incorporated in a man and not that applied without a man is the strength which Christ brings to man. He compared outside strength to the support given by timbers against a tottering wall upon the street, and the strength which Christ gives to man to the sustaining food which a weak man takes to nourish him so he can stand again.

Jesus Christ brought life to man. He was a power, bringing new life to man. He taught that Jesus wanted men, first of all, to live. He caused men to do their very best. "He made the streams run full. He called the dead to life. He hated death. Wherever He went He brought vitality."<sup>2</sup> He compared Jesus to a channel through which life flowed from God, the great Reservoir and Source of life, to man. "What He would do for every man was to set that man's nature into the Divine

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<sup>1</sup>Phillips Brooks, "Christ, the Food of Man," The Candle of the Lord and Other Sermons (second series; New York: Dutton and Company, 1881), p. 246.

<sup>2</sup>Brooks, The More Abundant Life, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

Nature so that the Divine Life could live in it."<sup>1</sup>

Phillips Brooks saw Jesus speaking of sin as dreadful because it is death, because it is so much out of the world's and man's vitality and because it is a destruction of the very essence of manhood. He felt that Jesus saw man as ceasing to live as man when he was doing wrong. He declared that Jesus did not teach "to err is human," rather that he believed "to do right is human," for "the purpose and nature of humanity is to do right, and to sin is to fail of human life."<sup>2</sup> Jesus comes to us, according to him, not to give us a new creation but an impartation of the life which is already in us. He explained the death of Jesus as His life-giving work in the following words:

But He died not for those disciples only: He died for all, that all might live to Him. He died for us, that we might live to Him; that we may always have our faces set that way, always be coming hearer to Him; always be serving Him with a profounder gratitude and imitating Him with a more implicit love, always be struggling towards Him till at last we come to Him, and be with Him forever. This is what He died for. Watching that as it goes on in us, He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.<sup>3</sup>

The work of Jesus as the supreme manifestant, the perfect pastor and servant of men, the strength giver, and life bringer might be summarized in two terms which Phillips Brooks often used in referring to Jesus Christ. They are redeemer and saviour. These above all other terms best describe what he thought the work of Jesus Christ to be. He

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 242.

was the One who, showing men the Father and who they were, brought them back to God, saving them from eternal death to the fulfillment of their sonship. Regarding the redeeming work of Christ, Bishop Brooks said, "He is the redeemer of man into the fatherhood of God,"<sup>1</sup> and ". . . the opening of his life on both sides, towards the truth of God and towards the needs of man . . . nothing but Christ and His Redemption can thoroughly satisfy these wants . . ."<sup>2</sup> It was an important point with Phillips Brooks that Jesus redeemed and saved men to the Father. Redeeming and saving did not carry with him the negative aspect so commonly heard among the evangelists with detailed descriptions of sin, hell, and damnation. His more positive approach was stated in these words:

Not to judge you, but to save you does Christ come now, O my dear friend. . . . You are afraid, for you have heard that He is terrible in His hatred of sin, but the first words that He says are, "I am come not to judge you, but to save you." And the offer of salvation makes you feel your sin far more keenly than any threat of punishment could.<sup>3</sup>

He felt the emphasis of Jesus was on the love of the Father for His children and not upon the threat of punishment.

Phillips Brooks felt that Jesus Christ was his Saviour. He personally testified that knowing Jesus had been a new life for him.

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<sup>1</sup>Brooks, The Influence of Jesus, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Brooks, Lectures on Preaching, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>3</sup>Brooks, The More Abundant Life, op. cit., p. 33.

It was his salvation or saving and he would go wherever Jesus led him and would be whoever Jesus made him.<sup>1</sup> It was common for him in the concluding paragraph of a sermon to plead with his hearers to come to Jesus and accept Him as their Saviour. Often the appeal would be an indirect one, or it might be as direct as saying, "Ask Him to be your Savior. Ask Him to forgive your sins. Ask Him to take your sins out of you and make you pure."<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Brooks saw Jesus's saving work as one of revelation, the manifesting of God to man and man to man. It was Jesus, the Saviour, who opened our eyes that we might see our Heavenly Father and see ourselves as we really are. It was this saving power of Jesus which gave all things a place and a meaning. Phillips Brooks had come to know Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and as the Redeemer and Saviour of all men. This was the work which God the Father had sent Him to this earth to do, and this is what He had done as a true and faithful Son, so that the Father would say of Him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,"<sup>3</sup> at the end as well as at the beginning of His earthly ministry.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>2</sup>Phillips Brooks, "The Mystery of Light," The Candle of the Lord and Other Sermons (second series; New York: Dutton and Company, 1881), p. 319.

<sup>3</sup>Matthew 3:17.



### CHAPTER III

#### CONCLUSIONS

The material presented in this paper to this point has been mostly the views of others about Phillips Brooks and the views of Phillips Brooks on Jesus Christ. I have tried to be as objective as possible and not present my own views. When one comes to making an evaluation, drawing conclusions, and judging a man like Phillips Brooks, he feels like the American tourist who, when viewing some classical paintings at an art exhibit in Europe and remarking that he did not think so highly of them, was reminded by the guide that the paintings were not on trial. Phillips Brooks needs no defense regarding his orthodoxy. One has only to read a cross section of his works. The charges that he was a Unitarian are ridiculous. His being called a Pelagian probably stems from a misunderstanding of his views regarding the nature of the goodness in man. He did not believe that man had the power within himself to save himself. Rather, he taught that the saving power in man comes from God and is the Spirit of God.

Although he wrote no book of systematic theology, my study of his works for this paper has given me a clearer and more definite understanding of the meaning of the humanity and divinity of Jesus than I have found in other reading on this subject. Perhaps his best single work on Christology is The Influence of Jesus, the Bohlen Lectures of 1879. His dealing with the moral and emotional aspects of the life of



Jesus Christ is particularly a refreshing approach to Jesus.

During the past few years, there has been a renewed interest in Anglican circles in the writings of Frederick Denison Maurice, the English theologian of the nineteenth century. Phillips Brooks read Maurice and was undoubtedly influenced by him.

He noted with some surprise and regret, in his later visits to England, that the rising generation of clergy were turning aside from Maurice's theology in order to devote themselves more exclusively to social studies and methods of social reform.<sup>1</sup>

The similarity of the views held by these two great men is interesting. It has been written of Maurice:

The truth from which he started was that God has created and redeemed mankind in Christ. God's union with our race in the Person of a Mediator is to be received as the interpretation of all other facts, as the kernel mystery of the universe.<sup>2</sup>

The same thought of Jesus Christ being the key to unlock the meanings of the universe was expressed by him:

The manifestations of the Son of God, of Christ, gives all other blessings a place and meaning, just as the sun in heaven accounts for and rescues from fragmentariness every little light of the innumerable host which in every hue and brilliancy, sparkle and flash and glow from every point of our sun-lit world.<sup>3</sup>

Brooks and Maurice, who was hailed by many as the greatest theologian of his day, held so many theological views in common. The

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<sup>1</sup>Allen, Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, op. cit., II, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup>Alec R. Vidler, The Theology of F. D. Maurice (London: S C M Press, Ltd., 1948), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Phillips Brooks, "The Opening of the Eyes," The Light of the World and Other Sermons (fifth series; New York: Dutton and Company, 1890), p. 202.

basic view of each upon which a substantial part of the rest of their theology was built is that Jesus Christ is the head of the human race and not Adam. Maurice wrote, "Mankind stands not in Adam but in Christ,"<sup>1</sup> and Phillips Brooks said, ". . . so He is always offering His whole human nature and calling on men to witness that He is truly human in thought and feeling and character, the pattern and fulfillment of humanity."<sup>2</sup> Creation and the Incarnation, not the Fall, are the cornerstone of their theology. From such a premise it follows that they believed in the fundamental and basic goodness of man. Man, being created in the image of God, is primarily righteous and in the state of union with God. Therefore, "Sin, the condition of separation from and rebellion against God is not then man's true state; his evil nature is due to his departure from his true state."<sup>3</sup> That Phillips Brooks thought too highly of man is the general and vague criticism of him today in some Anglican circles, but the facts are that he has as his companion Frederick Maurice and that he spoke not about what man does today but what he is, a son of God, being made in God's image with the Spirit of God in him, and, as a son of God, is capable of doing. His famous sermon, "The Candle of the Lord," is one of the best illustrations of his theology that the greatness of God the Father is seen in the perfect revelation of Jesus Christ and that there is a perpetual revelation of God by

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<sup>1</sup>Vidler, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Brooks, "The Manliness of Christ," op. cit., p. 252.

<sup>3</sup>Vidler, op. cit., p. 42.

human life. Man is not important or an end in himself, but he is precious because of his relationship with His Heavenly Father.

Speaking relatively, Phillips Brooks was more a follower of the Incarnation than he was an advocate of the Atonement, in the traditional sense of a change in God happening outside of man by the death of Christ. He held no view of a changing God, but that of a revealing God. He preferred St. John's Gospel to St. Paul's Letters, but he was never at war with Paul. He thought what Jesus did for a man from the inside was greater than what He did on the outside of a man. A man's good works did not save him, but were the product of a man who was at-one with God. Morality was an important issue with him for he felt that the strength of Christ which comes to us to be our strength is His character, the perfectness of His moral life. This was an external strength which Christ supplies to man.

The original purpose of this paper was an attempt by the study for it to probe and to find the "secret" of Phillips Brooks. What is the "secret" of his greatness? What did he have that the rest of us do not have? Why do we fail to measure up? What made him the success that he was as a preacher and as a man of God?

He had many natural endowments, such as a keen mind and a strong body, which are certainly initial gifts from God. He was blessed with a fine environment, a good home, where he was loved and which offered him the opportunities to develop his mind in fine schools of higher education. He chose to remain single which afforded him longer hours in the study and a freedom to travel. But there are other men who have

had such blessings as these, without ever reaching his height. Regarding the success of his preaching one should remember his own words:

There are many preachers who seem to do nothing else, always discussing Christianity as a problem instead of announcing Christianity as a message, and proclaiming Christ as Savior. . . . Beware of the tendency to preach about Christianity, and try to preach Christ. To discuss the relations of Christianity and Science, Christianity and Society, Christianity and Politics, is good. To set Christ forth to men so that they shall know Him, and in gratitude and love become His, that is far better. It is good to be a Herschel who describes the sun; but it is better to be a Prometheus who brings the sun's fire to the earth.<sup>1</sup>

Before a man can preach Christ, he must first be close to Christ and have Him in his heart. This was what Phillips Brooks had. This was the "secret" of his life. He was so near to Jesus Christ that he knew Him as his personal Saviour and the Lord of all men. His own words in his reply to a letter in 1891, asking him to tell the secret of his life, help in the finding of the answer:

My Dear Addison, I am sure you will not think that I dream that I have any secret to tell. I have only the testimony to bear which any friend may fully bear to his friend when he is cordially asked for it, as you have asked me.

Indeed, the more I have thought it over, the less in some sense I have seemed to have to say. And yet the more sure it has seemed to me that these last years have had a peace and a fullness which there did not use to be. I say it in deep reverence and humility. I do not think it is the mere quietness of advancing age. I am sure it is not indifference to anything I use to care for. I am sure that it is a deeper knowledge and truer love of Christ.

And it seems to me impossible that this should have come in any way except by the experience of life. I find myself pitying the friends of my youth, who died when we were twenty-five

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<sup>1</sup>Brooks, Lectures on Preaching, op. cit., p. 20.

years old, because whatever may be the richness of the life to which they have gone, and in which they have been living ever since, they never can know that particular manifestation of Christ which He makes to us here on earth, at each successive period of our human life. All experience comes to be put more and more of pressure of His life on ours. It cannot come by one flash of light, or one great convulsive event. It comes without haste and without rest in this perpetual living of our life with Him. And all the history, of outer or inner life, of the changes of circumstances, or the changes of thought, gets its meaning and value from this constantly growing relation to Christ.

I cannot tell you how personal this grows on me. He is here. He knows me and I know Him. It is no figure of speech. It is the realest thing in the world. And every day makes it realler. And one wonders with delight what it will grow to as the years go on.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Allen, Phillips Brooks, 1835-93, op. cit., p. 605.

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